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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 RSR-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-06 H-02 INR-06 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-10 P-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 AID-20
UPW-01 IO-11 /106 W

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P R 301540Z AUG 71
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9364
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
CINCPAC
AMCONSUL DANANG
USDEL FRANCE
AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Joan Spruch DATE: 1/26/82
RDS☐or XDS☐EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. REASON(S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED☑ RELEASABLE☑
RELEASE DENIED☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

SAIGON 13966 8/30/71

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 13966

SUBJ: LOWER HOUSE ELECTION: RIGGING CHARGES

REF: SAIGON 13891

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

1. OPPOSITION DEPUTY NGO CONG DUC (VINH BINH PROVINCE) HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE AUGUST 29 IN WHICH HE AMPLIFIED HIS CHARGES MADE THE PREVIOUS EVENING AT THE ELECTION INFORMATION CENTER (REFTEL). DUC CLAIMED THAT INCUMBENT DEPUTY NGUYEN VAN THANH, AFTER HEARING OF ELECTION IRREGULARITIES, PROCEEDED TO HUYEN HOI VILLAGE, AND WHILE HE WAS TRYING TO SEIZE EVIDENCE IN THE POLLING AREA, A PISTOL DROPPED OUT OF HIS POCKET. LOCAL PF SOLDIERS GUARDING THE POLLS THEN ARRESTED HIM. CONTRARY TO GOVERNMENT CHARGES (SET FORTH IN A PRESS RELEASE ISSUED BY THE ELECTION CENTER), THANH WAS NOT TRYING TO THREATEN THE POLL WORKERS WITH THE GUN, DUC ASSERTED.

2. DUC ALSO CHARGED THE GOVERNMENT WITH WIDESPREAD IRREGULARITIES IN VINH BINH, INCLUDNG THE DISTRIBUTION TO

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VOTERS OF VOTER CARDS THAT HAD ALREADY BEEN USED TO VOTE AND CLIPPED, AND THE FILLING OF BALLOT BOXES BEFORE ELECTION DAY

(THIS LATTER POINT WAS OBSERVED BY CORRESPONDENTS OF TIME AND NEWSWEEK, ACCORDING TO DUC). DUC ALLEGED OTHER IRREGULARITIES SUCH AS LOCATING POLLS IN ISOLATED AND INSECURE AREAS, GOVERNMENT AGENTS' POSING AS VIET CONG PREVENTING PEOPLE FROM VOTING, VILLAGE CHIEFS BEING FORCED TO RESIGN IF THEY DID NOT PRODUCE THE REQUIRED NUMBER TO VOTES FOR THE GOVERNMENT CANDIDATES, AND HARASSMENT OF HIS ELECTION OBSERVERS. (DUC ALSO SHOWED A NEWSMEN A BATCH OF CLIPPED VOTERS' CARDS, WHICH THE GOVERNMENT PRESS RELEASE MENTIONED ABOVE CLAIMED DUC HAD TAKEN FROM A "YOUTH CADRE" AT GUNPOINT.)

3. APPEARING WITH DUC WERE DEPUTIES DUONG VAN BA AND THACH PEN OF BAC LIEU PROVINCE. BA AND PHEN SAID THEY HAD WITHDRAWN FROM THE LECTION ALONG WITH CANDIDATE TRAN BUU SAN AT 11:00 AM AUGUST 28 IN THE COURSE OF A DEMONSTRATION BEFORE THE L ER HOUSE OF THE NAT.NAL ASSEMBLY BECAUSE OF THE IRREGULAR.TIES IN BAC LIEU. BA AND PHEN REPEATED DUC'S CHARGES OF IRREGULARITIES WITH VOTER CARDS (SUCH AS CUTTING OFF THE CORNERS BEFORE DISTRIBUTION) AND HARASSMENT OF THEIR CAMPAIGN WORKERS AND ELECTION OBSERVERS. (A MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR SOURCE INDICATES THIS SO-CALLED WITHDRAWAL WAS NOT CARRIED OUT PROPERLY AND BALLOTS FOR THESE CANDIDATES WERE DISTRIBUTED TO THE VOTERS.)

4. BA ALSO DESCRIBED AN INCIDENT IN WHICH HE AND PHEN WERE ALLEGEDLY FORCED TO HIDE IN A PAGODA WHILE GOVERNMENT SOLDIERS WAITED OUTSIDE TO BEAT THEM. THEY WERE LATER RESCUED BY A HELICOPTER CARRYING SENATORS HONG SON DONG AND TRAN DUY DON WHICH LANDED BESIDE THEIR PAGODA AND TOOK THEM BACK TO SAIGON.

5. COMMENT: DUC AND BA ARE PROBABLY ACCURATE IN AT LEAST SOME OF THEIR CHARGES, SINCE THEY WERE BOTH DEFEATED ALTHOUGH GENERALLY CONSIDERED FRONTRUNNERS. REPORTS FROM THE PROVINCZT INDICATE THE GOVERNMENT WAS TAKING ACTION TO DEFEAT THEM. DUC AND BA ARE CLEVER PUBLICISTS, AND THESE PARTICULAR IRREGULARITIES WILL PROBABLY ATTRACT CONSIDERABLE PRESS ATTENTION.
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